



Division Guideline #41

Date: Created June 19, 2015 (from Directive 1.070)

Title: Travel Policy for Regional Offices and State Operated Programs

Application: All state employees of Department of Mental Health, Division of Developmental Disabilities Regional Offices and State Operated Programs (SOP).

Purpose: To ensure consistent practices with regard to work-related travel by Regional Office and SOP employees, and reimbursement to employees for such travel.

Section I-General Guidelines

- A. There shall be no individual facility policies pertaining to this topic, however, facilities may develop procedures in order to implement this directive.
- B. The term “travel” as used in this directive applies to travel necessary to complete official state business.
- C. All vehicles in a Regional Office’s or State Operated Program’s fleet shall be made available to all staff. There shall be no vehicles assigned to “Administration”.
- D. Facilities may designate one or more vehicles for out-of-region travel. When not reserved for out-of-region travel, these designated vehicles shall be available for local travel.
- E. Employees should not take state vehicles home with them except in rare circumstances that require a very early departure time the following day, or a very late return time such that the travel time to the Regional Office or SOP to pick up or return the state vehicle would require an unreasonable departure time (prior to 6:30 a.m.) from home or arrival back at home (after 8 p.m.) at the end of the travel. Prior approval from the Regional Director, Superintendent, or their designee is required for this.
- F. Employees traveling to the same destination should carpool whenever possible. Employees who choose to travel using their personal vehicles, when carpooling from the same location is available,

shall be denied reimbursement if there is reasonable space available in a state or rental vehicle traveling to the same destination for the same purpose.

- G. Employees must use a state credit card for fuel and other related expenses when driving a state vehicle or a rental vehicle.
- H. Provider staff and individuals receiving DD services may ride with state employees in a state or rental vehicle when traveling to the same destination. However, the use of a state or rental vehicle to transport ~~a~~an individual receiving DD services (outside of a State Operated Program) to a service destination or medical appointment is discouraged and should not be done unless there is no other means for the individual to get to the service destination or medical appointment.
- I. State employees are the only persons authorized to drive state vehicles and vehicles rented under the State contract.

Section II-Requirements

- A. State employees who use a state vehicle must have a valid operator's license or a valid commercial driver's license. An employee who has had his/her license suspended must inform the supervisor immediately about the loss of the license and the date of suspension. Employees must provide evidence to their supervisor (e.g., a copy of the application for a hardship license) of the specific efforts they have made to reinstate their driving privileges. Driving privileges will be verified through the Missouri Department of Revenue, and their records will be the basis for the official driving status.
- B. Employees will not be allowed to operate state vehicles until they have obtained a temporary or hardship license. During the interim period, employees whose essential job functions include driving may be required to go on a leave of absence if they have no alternate means of transportation.
- C. All employees must comply with state laws while operating state vehicles and must always operate state vehicles in a courteous and safe manner. Employees who do not comply with state law while operating a state vehicle may be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal from employment.

Section III-Travel Options

- A. Employees must use the most cost effective travel option when traveling on state business. All relevant factors must be considered, such as: urgency, nature of travel required, type of vehicle required for the number of passengers, employee time and effort, official domicile, proximity to rental or state vehicles, times of operation for rental offices, location of Regional Offices or SOP, and destination sites and time of travel.

- B. In most circumstances, state or rental vehicles are more cost effective than personal mileage reimbursement; therefore, employees should avoid driving privately owned vehicles for official state business so that travel expenses are minimized to the fullest extent possible.
- C. If a state vehicle is available and the employee chooses to drive a privately owned vehicle, the maximum reimbursement rate shall be limited to the state fleet rate for travel that is less than 100 miles per single trip. A single trip includes any number of trips taken by an employee during the same day. Exceptions to this are when the use of a state vehicle is not cost effective with regard to use of the employee's time/destination/Regional Office location/time of day of the travel. (Example: An employee travels to a meeting/home visit, etc. at the start of the work day, or as last appointment at the end of a work day. The distance to drive to the Regional Office to take/return a state vehicle is greater than the distance to the employee's home to/from the destination site. The employee can be reimbursed at the standard rate for the total number of miles driven to/from the Regional Office from/to the destination from/to the employee's home minus the number of miles from the employee's home to the Regional Office.) Prior approval from the employee's supervisor or administrative staff is required for this.
- D. Employees must use the *Trip Optimizer* to determine the most cost effective travel option for interstate single trips. The *Trip Optimizer* is maintained at <http://tripoptimizer.mo.gov/>. The exception to this is when travel is less than 100 miles per single trip, which includes any number of trips taken by an employee during the same day.
- E. If a state vehicle is determined to be the most cost effective option as per the *Trip Optimizer*, but a state vehicle is not available, a determination should be made as to the next cost effective option whether that is a rental vehicle or a personal vehicle reimbursed at the standard rate. The maximum reimbursement shall not exceed the cost of a rental, including fuel cost, or mileage at the standard rate, whichever is lower.
- F. When an employee claims the standard mileage reimbursement on the monthly expense account form for travel, the employee must note that a state vehicle was not available, or a copy of the *Trip Optimizer* or documentation that an exception was granted as per III (C) above must be attached to the expense form. If one of these is not done, the fleet rate will be reimbursed.
- G. Regional Directors and Superintendents shall have a process in place for the review of original source documentation for actual vehicle availability and usage for employees who typically and regularly claim standard mileage reimbursement based on a "state vehicle not available" justification, or who claim a significant number of trips or amount of reimbursement for any given month. Nothing in this directive precludes the Regional Director or Superintendent from comparing any/all expense account forms to vehicle availability and usage records.
- H. If the *Trip Optimizer* indicates that a rental vehicle is the most cost effective option, the distance to the rental site and the time the site opens for business must be considered. It may be necessary for the rental to be used for an additional day in order to accommodate the employee's travel. The cost of renting the vehicle for the additional day must be part of the data calculated by the *Trip*

Optimizer. Typically, all car rental sites have an after-hours key return box so that returning a car after the rental office has closed should not be a concern.

- I. As stated in III (A) above, proximity to the rental location and the travel destination must also be considered. The *Trip Optimizer* does not consider any other factor except distance and estimated cost for the travel. If the *Trip Optimizer* indicates that a rental is the best option but other factors apply, the employee should obtain prior approval from the supervisor or administrative staff to use a different option. Documentation to explain the exception should be attached to the expense account form.
- J. If a rental vehicle is not available at the nearest rental site, the screen that indicates “no availability” should be printed and attached to the employee’s expense report if the employee has no other reasonable alternative except to use a private vehicle and be reimbursed at the standard mileage rate. A copy of the *Trip Optimizer* should also be attached to the expense account form.
- K. If an employee is attending an out-of-town meeting and is staying overnight with friends/relatives, thereby eliminating the cost of a hotel, and has received prior approval from the supervisor or administrative staff to drive a personal vehicle, the employee is reimbursed at the standard mileage rate. On the expense report, the employee should note in the explanation section “stayed with family/friends instead of hotel, supervisor/administrative approval given.” If an employee did not receive prior approval from the supervisor to use a personal vehicle, the fleet rate applies.

This guideline will be reviewed and updated annually, if needed.